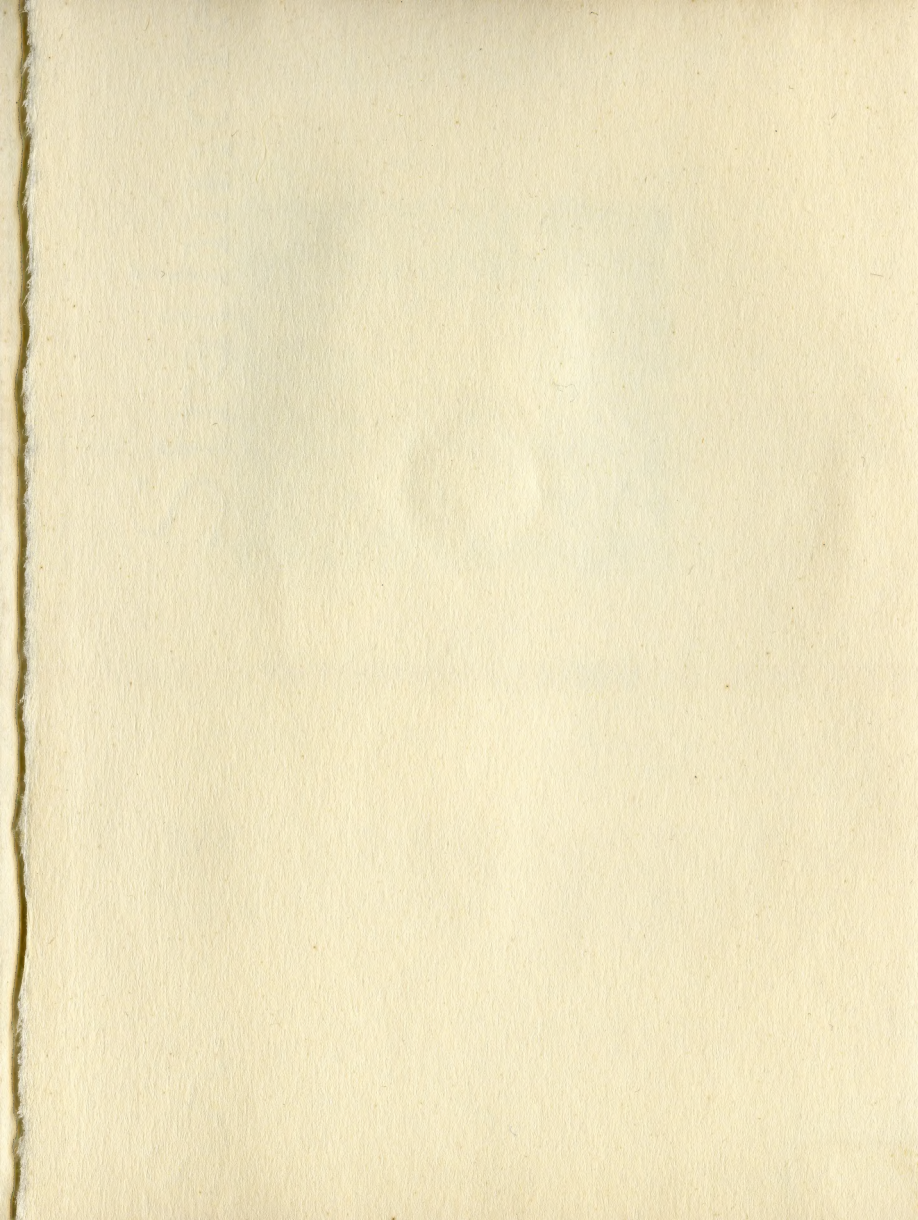


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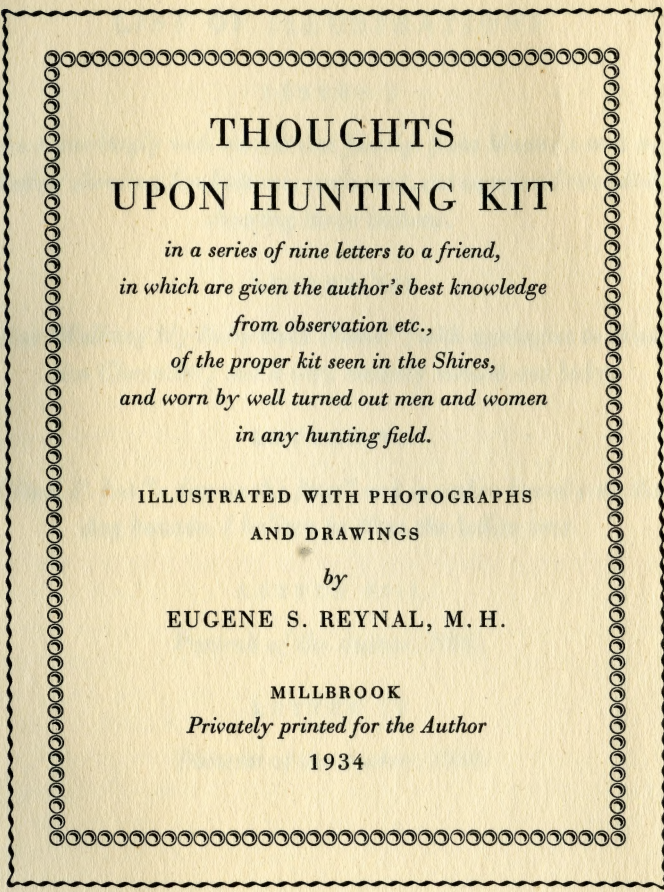
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THOUGHTS UPON HUNTING KIT

*in a series of nine letters to a friend,
in which are given the author's best knowledge
from observation etc.,
of the proper kit seen in the Shires,
and worn by well turned out men and women
in any hunting field.*

ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS
AND DRAWINGS

by
EUGENE S. REYNAL, M. H.

MILLBROOK
Privately printed for the Author

1934

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PREFACE

The following letter, published in HORSE AND HOUND inspired me to write the following pages.

WOMEN'S DRESS IN THE HUNTING FIELD

Sir—Another hunting season is upon us, and perhaps it would not be out of place for me to comment, as an old fogey, on the dangerous topic of women's dress in the hunting-field.

Let us first of all be quite clear on one or two points. Firstly, it is largely due to women hunting that the sport has continued, nay, even flourished, since the war. Secondly, women have decided, and proved, that they can ride astride. Not all, admittedly, but certainly a good proportion of the new generation.

The point I wish to make, however, is perhaps somewhat startling but true, and it is that the astride brigade's influence sartorially is having a slovenly effect upon dress in general in the hunting-field. Women now in astride hunting-kit dress like men; we have all got used to that, but why should they choose the kit of a second horseman? Bowler hat, black coat, fawn breeches, butcher boots is the kit of a servant, nothing else.

In these days of general slackness in dress many of us would like to go out in "ratcatcher," which is cheaper and more comfortable; but we don't because we try, even with a slender purse, to maintain the pageantry of the Hunt. Why should women by their adoption of such a drab conventional dress encourage degeneration?

Having adopted men's dress (quite rightly, I maintain), is there anything to be afraid of in a top hat? After all, our grandmothers wore them, even with long flowing skirts. Are white breeches indelicate as compared with lemon colour? Finally, is a scarlet coat an impossibility? Is it unfeminine as compared with a black? I don't frankly, understand the point of view.

I know I shall be "jumped on," but my point really is this: If women are to dress like men can't they be persuaded to dress like "gentlemen"? In no other walk of life do they, in appearance, play second fiddle to—Yours, &c.,

THE MERE MALE.

»[LETTER I]«

Millbrook, New York

December 4, 1933

You could not have chosen a better time than the present to remind me of sending you my thoughts upon hunting kit. I hope to finish a great part of these letters without further delay. This, however, I most desire first to be understood between us: without tacking a salvo to the tail of it, such as "In my opinion," "To the best of my judgment," etc., you shall not call my humility in question, as the assertion is not meant to be mathematically certain.

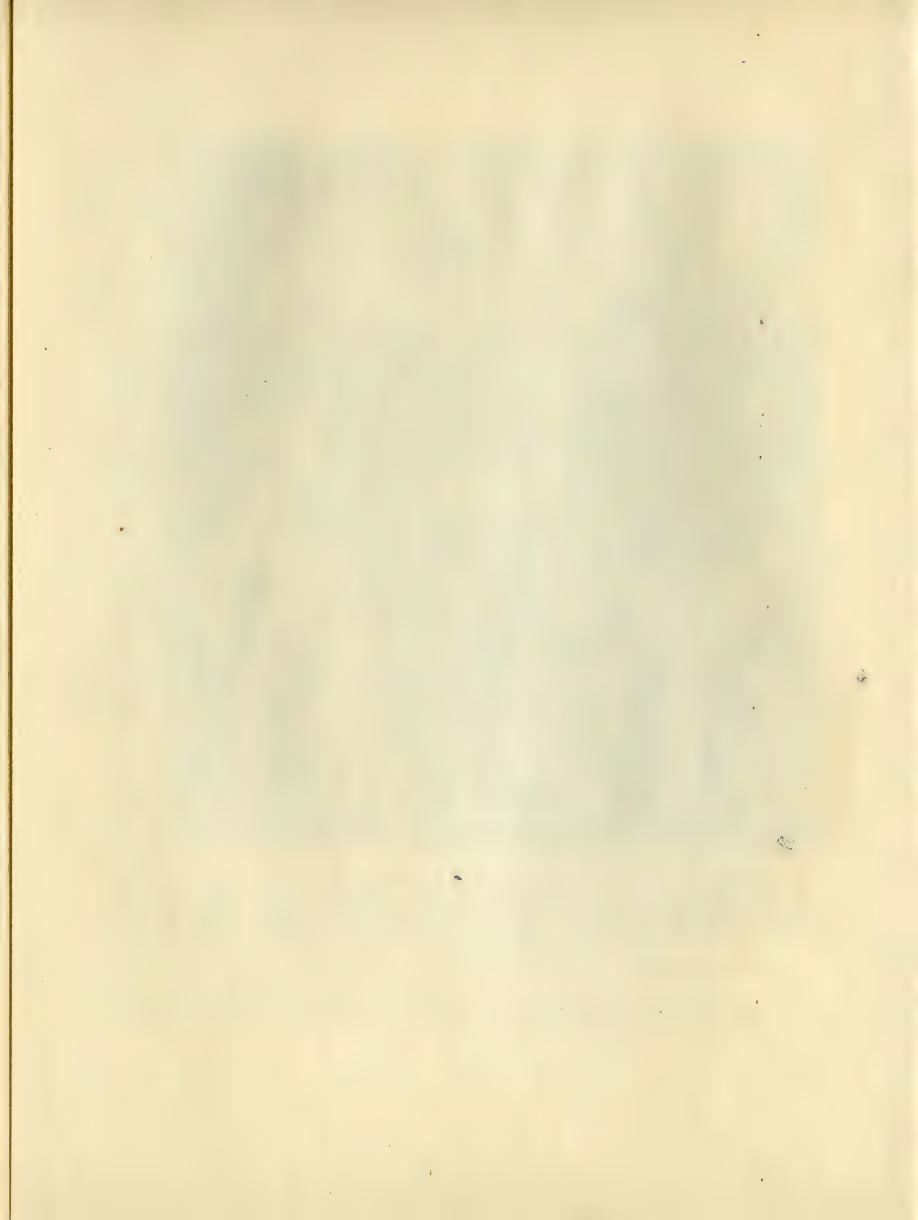
You may remember our discussion about dress for men and women in the hunting field, especially the latter now that so many ride astride and so well. If the English sportsmen may be granted supremacy in the art of hunting, as the hounds which that country produces are, in my mind, thought to be the best in the world, I believe it may also be allowed that this standard in dress be accepted as the universal model. However, there are exceptions to this standard, all followers of

this diversion do not dress correctly but I have observed an extraordinary number who do.

It may be objected too, that the hunting of a pack of hounds depends upon the huntsman, so I believe I had better start describing him dressed for a day's sport: A velvet cap, bow at the back, ends of ribbon hanging down; white stock with safety-pin, which is most useful in bandaging horse or man, scarlet coat or green, if hare are hunted, cut square in front—not too long, with only a change pocket with flap, no side pockets or flaps, five buttons in front, two at the back and two on each sleeve. His coat should have very large pockets in the inside of the skirt. His waistcoat should be made of thick flannel, patch pockets, hunt buttons, and last but not least, long in the back to cover well his kidneys, white breeches showing four buttons at the knee. Black boots with mahogany tops, although some amateurs use pink or straw colour. If they do, the whippers-in must correspond; white garters, and spurs. Whipper-in same as huntsman. He may carry an extra leather over his shoulder, but I believe it is only one more thing to get caught in when one's horse comes down. Kennel coats (white) and bowler hats when hunt servants walk hounds out.



An exceedingly well turned out family. Note Master's coat on Father showing five buttons: son's coat, cut away and rounded, showing three buttons.



Since a great book has been long looked upon as a great evil, I shall take care not to sin that way at least and shall endeavor to make these letters as short as the extent of my subject will admit.

I shall now take my leave of you for the present. In my next letter I shall proceed according to your desire until I have answered all your questions. Remember you are not to expect entertainment; I hope that you may find some instruction. The dryness of the subject may excuse your want of one, and I cannot doubt of your indulgence, whilst I am obeying your commands, though I should fail in the other.

»[LETTER II]«

There are a few things, you say, I have not made quite clear or said enough about, so I shall try to do so in this letter and get on to Master of both sexes. Yes, all who hunt should carry string gloves under the flaps of the saddle, if astride, one on each, fingers facing forward; side saddle, both gloves under flap (off side) fingers facing forward.

It is quite proper for the huntsman to put his horn in his coat going to the meet and returning to the kennel, when hounds are drawing, and always when he gets off his horse.

One should always be able to turn up the collar of a riding coat and have it button comfortably, although well turned out people never turn their collars up when hunting no matter how hard it rains. Hunt servants must carry extra whipcord points for their thongs in their pockets.

You will find this letter rather dry reading but it answers all the questions you asked me.

»[LETTER III]«

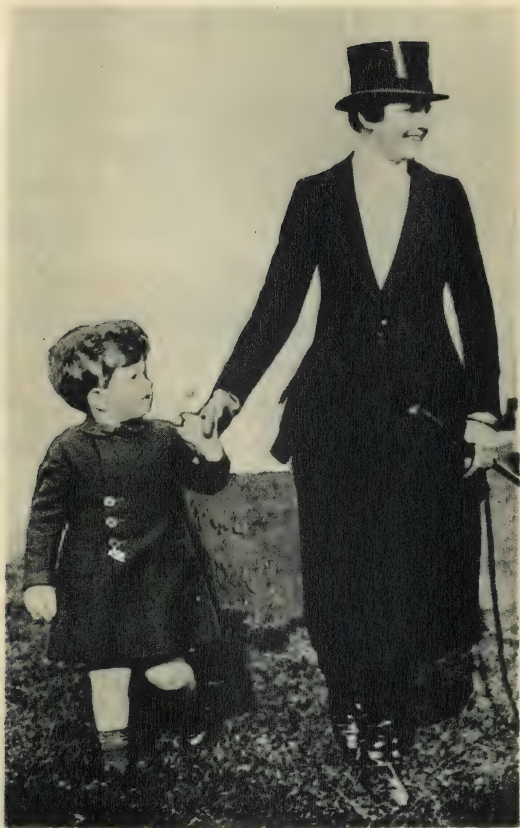
I am quite sure you will find this letter more interesting than the last, and I know I shall like writing it much better.

You say you would like to know what Lady Masters should wear. If they ride astride, regardless of whether they carry the horn in the hunting field, I believe they should wear a cap, stock, hunt coat, white breeches, topboots, spurs, and carry a crop. The poor Victorian darlings riding side saddle, hunting hounds or acting as Field Master to a huntsman, should wear a hunt coat, dark skirt, black butcher boots, spur, and carry a crop. If she hunts hounds, she must wear a cap. Master in name only, she may wear either cap or silk hat and veil, but a cap is preferable as it gives the field a better chance to distinguish her quickly. I believe Lady Masters not hunting hounds, however, look much better in a dark habit regardless of what they have on their heads.

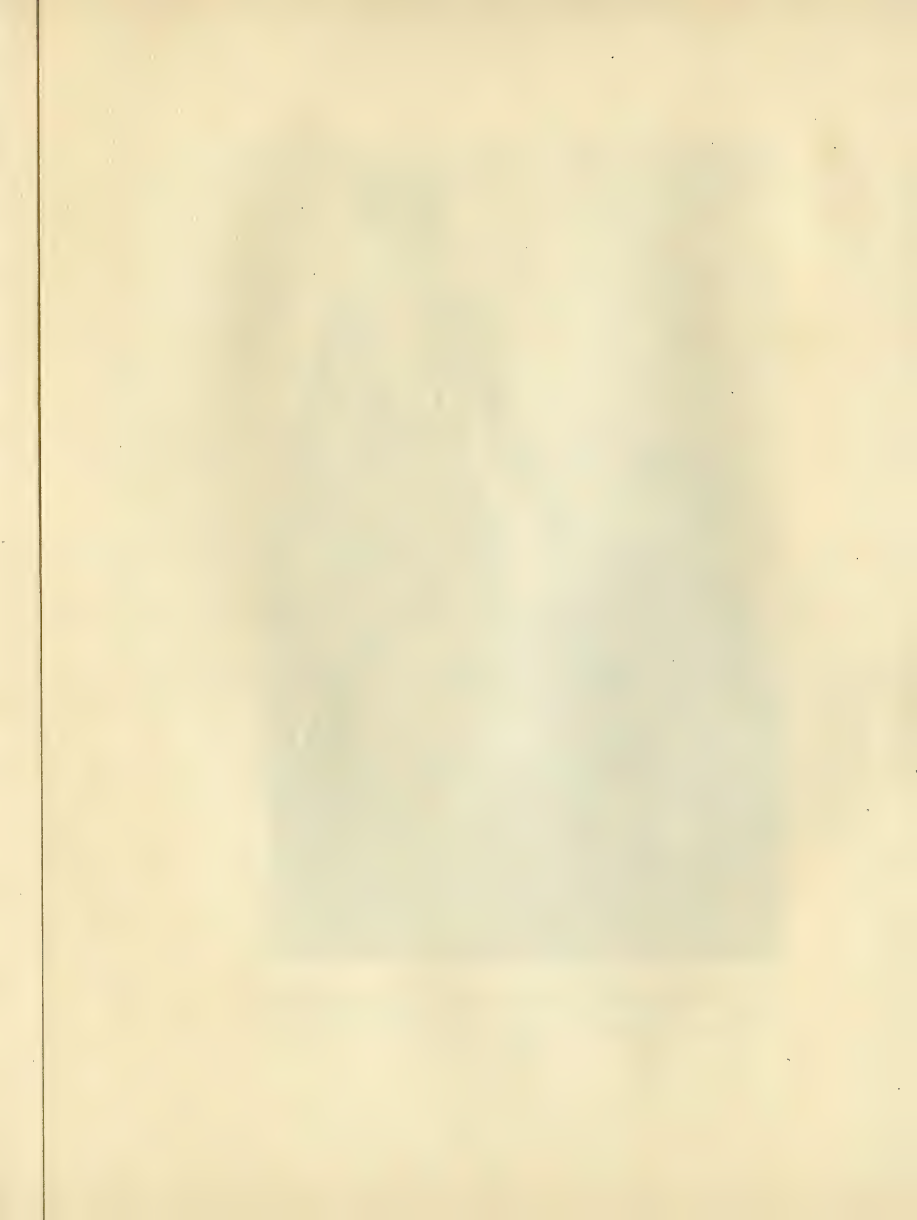
Other women in the hunting field should wear a dark habit, black butcher boots, spur, and carry a crop, top hat or bowler and a veil. For those that prefer, "ratcatcher," black bowler hat, dark coat, not black, or tweed of a sort that does

not cry out or weep, stock, black butcher and spurs. I suppose I must write crop again, just as if anyone who hunts did not know that even a second horseman must carry one.

The ladies, God bless them, have given me writer's cramp, so I will bid them adieu.



Not "Walking My Baby Back Home" (with apologies to Maurice Chevalier) but a very smartly turned out lady.



»[LETTER IV]«

You write me that Oliver P. is going to hunt in the Shires this winter, and as he is our mutual friend my advice would keep him from making some of the faux pas so many people make their first season in a country where one is supposed to know the game and ignorance is no excuse. Let us suppose he is fixed up as far as Bond Street can make him: has his horses, and has rented a flat at Craven Lodge, Melton Mowbray, also stabling in their yard.

The first thing for him to do is to see the hunt secretary of the hunt he expects to hunt with; tell him that he has so many horses (a thing the secretary will know), and expects to hunt, say two days a week with his hunt and two with an adjacent hunt and would like to send a proper subscription. Let us hope he knows someone who will take him to his first meet and introduce him to the Master and a few of the field. (The Cove who took me always drove with me as he had put his own motor up on blocks and discharged his chauffeur).

Now the huntsman has received his orders and moves off: What an inspiring sight and what a thrill is in store for

Oliver P. They are going to draw, the Trussells and the huntsman caps hounds in. Oliver stands on one side of the covert with more pink coats and smart ladies in dark ones than he has ever seen at one time in his life. All is quiet as hounds race through the gorse; the Trussells is a gorse covert. If he is in a good place he hears a whimper and a "Push him up, my beauties" from the huntsman; then old "Melody" speaks to the fox's drag made by him during his night's wanderings, and is joined by a keen young hound, could it be "Languish"? More music as hounds go to "Melody." Then O. P., so excited about them and wondering if he will ever see them if they find, hears a sound he will never forget as "Charlie" (the fox), aroused, leaves his warm bed in the sun, and tries to slip away without being seen. Harry, the first whipper-in, is too sharp for him and as he leaves covert, looking from right to left, gives a view halloo that makes goose flesh stand out all over one. The huntsman with a "Forrad away" gallops to the halloo as fast as he can, and the hunt is on.

Oliver P. has long ago lost sight of the man who has been pointed out to him to follow; a "first flighter," as White Melville says, "a hard man to beat and a tough man to follow."

And from his good position at the start he finds himself with the old ladies and men all pushing and "Don't take my placing," who would not jump a cock hedge two feet high unless the reins broke, and he is back in number one hundred and thirty-sixth position. It is a ringing fox and O. P. gets another chance, but "poor Charlie" just out of sight has been bowled over in the open after a nice hunt of eighteen minutes, and the huntsman hollaring, "Dead, dead, dead" to his hounds, takes the fox from them, wondering if the American who has just come down will know enough to give him a "sov" for the brush, the mask, he pops into his pocket if he does not see a likely purchaser.

He gets on his horse and all move off to the next covert hounds are to draw. Too bad, not a fox at home, so with a long note on the horn they jog on to another. On the way an out-lier jumps up in front of the pack and away hounds go, running in view to the first hedge.

So goes the day and O. P., very tired, no skin in places where nature meant him to have it, wonders where he is and which way Melton lies. Hames, "rough rider," sets him going in the right direction, hoping he some day will buy a hunter from his boss.

»[LETTER V]«

You ask me if I know the reason why well turned out men turn out in the kit they do. If you read old books on hunting, sooner or later you will find the answer; but I will save you a lot of reading by answering as many of your questions as I can.

Starting at the cap or hunting hat: It is worn to protect the head when you get an "Imperial Crowner," and I must say anyone not hunting in a hard hat is a fool. The hunting cap worn by the Master and hunt staff will stand more abuse and take less looking-after than a top hat.

The stock or neck cloth was more or less universally worn in the country and can be used as a sling or used as a bandage if properly made, i. e., oblong white cloth folded four times. Scarlet coat so one could be more easily seen if knocked out and lying under a hedge; otherwise, one might lie out until the crows gathered. Flannel waistcoat to keep one warm. White leathers, the smartest things when well done but Hell to ride in; later mole skin, sandonette or other heavy white material was used.

Boots, Wellingtons, I believe they were called, were made like the boots worn by the Guards on Parade to protect the knee when charging through a "bull finch." In later years when hedges were "cut and laid" and you did not have to jump a hedge that looked like a young forest, the tops were turned over, and the inside of the leather being roughish was "done" with straw or pink powder. I do not know the origin of the garter but it does keep your boot up and in place.* Spurs to encourage your gee and a crop to turn hounds or cheer on a weary horse. It also has been used to double thong a yokel a bit slack to open a gate.

I cannot at this time answer your questions regarding etiquette in the hunting field but will do so in my next letter.

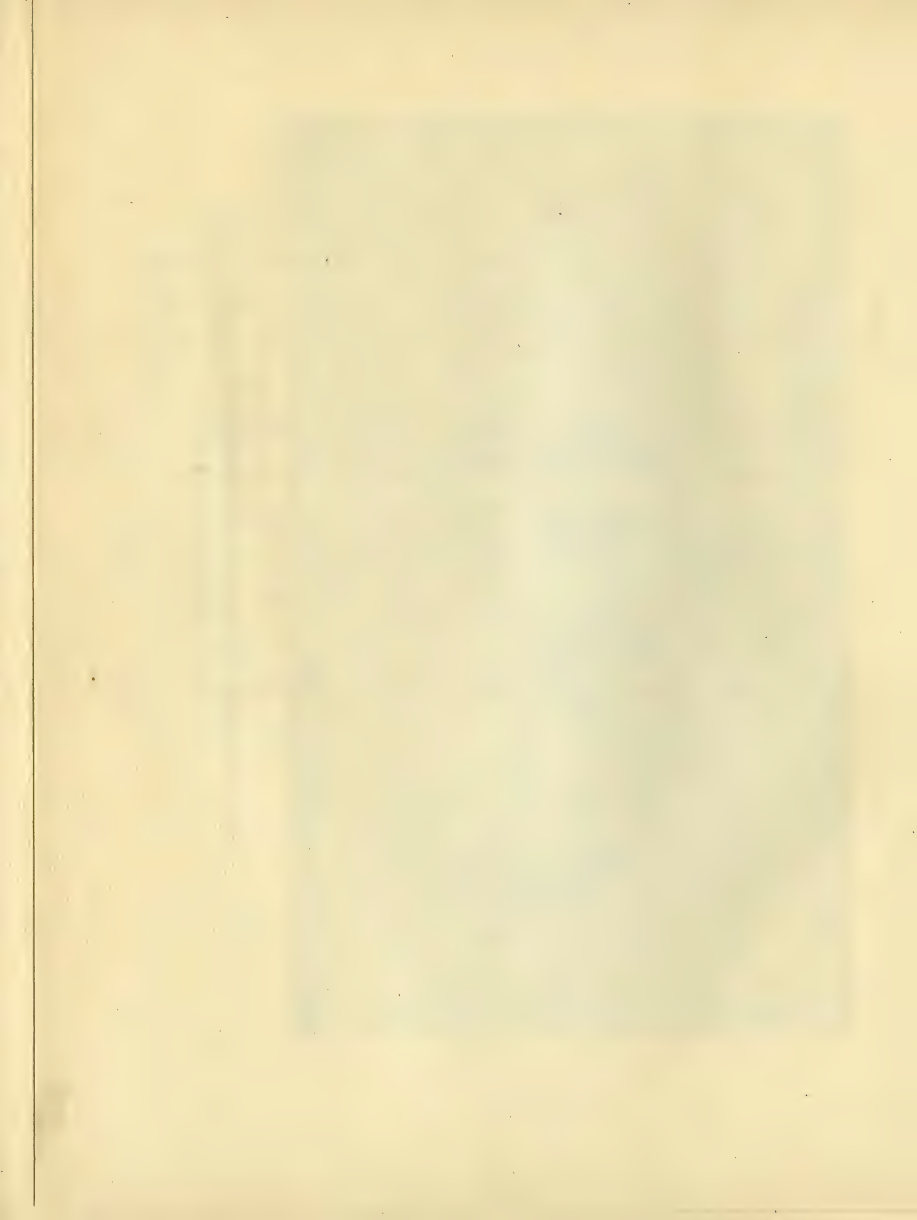
*Garters may have originated from tying the Wellington boot above the calf of the leg and turning the top over as seen in pictures of *The Three Musketeers*.

»[LETTER VI]«

On arriving at the meet, take off your hat or cap to the master. Touch your hat to all hunt servants, *coup de chapeau*. Always turn your horse's head towards the hounds even if he does not kick at hounds. It is the unloaded gun that kills people. Remember the Master, Huntsman, and Whipperins have the right of way at a fence or going through a gate in fact at any time, and that the Master is KING in the hunting field, regardless of what you think of him at any other time. When you have a "day on the flags" the Huntsman will show you some fifty odd couple of hounds that all look alike to you, and if you are not a hound man, you will be bored to extinction, except if you are observing, you will notice that some of the hounds are bitches and the rest dog hounds.



*Oliver P. has "a day on the flags" and is rather bored with the dog hounds.
I believe he likes the ladies best.*



»»[LETTER VII]««

Last but not least, Man, poor beggar, if the times do not make him appear as Cupid in the hunting field, should dress in a similar way to the Master except that his coat, pink or very dark gray, should be cut away and slightly rounded in front, with three buttons instead of five, top boots, spurs, and a top hat.

If you are very tall and have a small waist, ride a big, bold, blood horse with the best English tack on him and steel you can see to shave in. Waste no time getting to Bond Street to have a Shad belly draped on you; leathers, top boots (pink), spurs, and one of Mr. Lock's toppers made to fit your face. Now from the sublime to the ridiculous: the man in rat-catcher, think how he must feel alongside of Mr. Shadbelly jogging to the first covert; but just let hounds find you cannot take his fun away even if he is wearing an old tweed coat, bowler hat, cord breeches and black butcher boots, well boned, a well tied stock with rather large safety-pin in it.

Don't you think I have answered enough questions and written you more letters than I would write to a good looking girl.

Without asking me to do so, I will tell you about some extraordinary turn-outs I have seen at the meet.

a. Green Shadbelly, topped off with a guard's (road coach) gray hat.

b. Scarlet coat, no hat or cap.

c. Scarlet Shadbelly on a lady carrying the horn.

d. Spurs put on upside down are too common to mention.

I was asked one day in the Shires, when I was hunting from Melton Mowbray, if I knew an American who hunted there a few times the previous year. My fellow sportsman could not remember his name so tried to describe him, ending up by saying "You must know him as he always hunts with his spurs wrong side up." I told my acquaintance that I was unable to identify him that way as one saw dozens hunting like that at home.

After I had hunted in England several seasons they said they had gotten used to me, meaning I suppose I did not have any of the traits that Americans are expected to have in or out of the hunting fields. . . .

»[LETTER VIII]«

December 16, '33.

After a day without enough scent to fill your eye.

You say you remember every hunt you have ridden and the height of all the big fences you have jumped, what hounds did, and the country you crossed, and that I who have hunted for the past forty-six years must be able to remember every detail of a hunt. Well, I cannot, and only a few hunts stand out that I can remember anything about when I hark back and "day dream." It may be because I have fallen on my head so often—or just me.

The "drag" hunts are one with the old "Westchester Hounds" when a new Master, his initial run, had all his lady friends out in "surreys" lined up on the side of the road at a place where they could see him at his best; but the poor man had not walked the line and did not know one had to just skirt a wall by the side of a swamp with a brook well hidden by tall grass with black muck banks to follow hounds. Going "hell for leather" his poor gee put both front feet in the

brook and did a "comical." I wish you could have seen his new green coat; he was black muck from his ears down; hounds had eaten the "worry" by the time he arrived at the finish.

With Meadowbrook when a friend asked me to ride his "gray" and not to spare him as he wanted him to have a "work out" for the heavy weight division of the Meadowbrook Point to Point the following week, I did as he asked me and bust him along. The first half of the "drag" he lived up to his reputation and was the best "heavy weight" on the Island but tired very badly and broke every board fence on Mr. Bacon's place, bar one, but did not fall. How I prayed he would as he had "put the wind up me—feet." His owner told me afterwards that he had never gone so badly before. You can guess what he meant.

So much for "drag" hunting. Now the fox. A hunt some thirty-five years ago with the Lima, American hounds. They nearly killed a fox at . . . quite near the road. Being the only person with them, I killed the fox with the but end of my crop. American hounds rarely break up a fox. Then a farmer, following the hunt in a "buggy" claimed the fox as it was a

“dropped” fox hunt, i. e., big day for farmers with food and drink at the meet. What could I do but let him have it as he was much stronger than I was! I can see myself today hanging onto the “brush” end of the fox and the farmer on the other. Anyway, he won, and his parting words were that the fox would look fine stuffed on his mantle.

The next outstanding hunt was with Alex Higginson at “Smithfield” when he hunted the Millbrook country by invitation from Oakleigh Thorne, Esq. I cannot remember the date but it was the last year he hunted his own hounds—what a good pack they were. I believe the best pack of English hounds I ever saw hunt a fox in America. We, Alex and the hunt staff, Charlotte Lewis, now Mrs. Chancellor, and myself were the only ones out. What a hunt we had; about fifty minutes over the best paneled country I suppose in the world, no check to speak of, “Charley” dead beat in front of hounds, when “something happened” and hounds lost him.

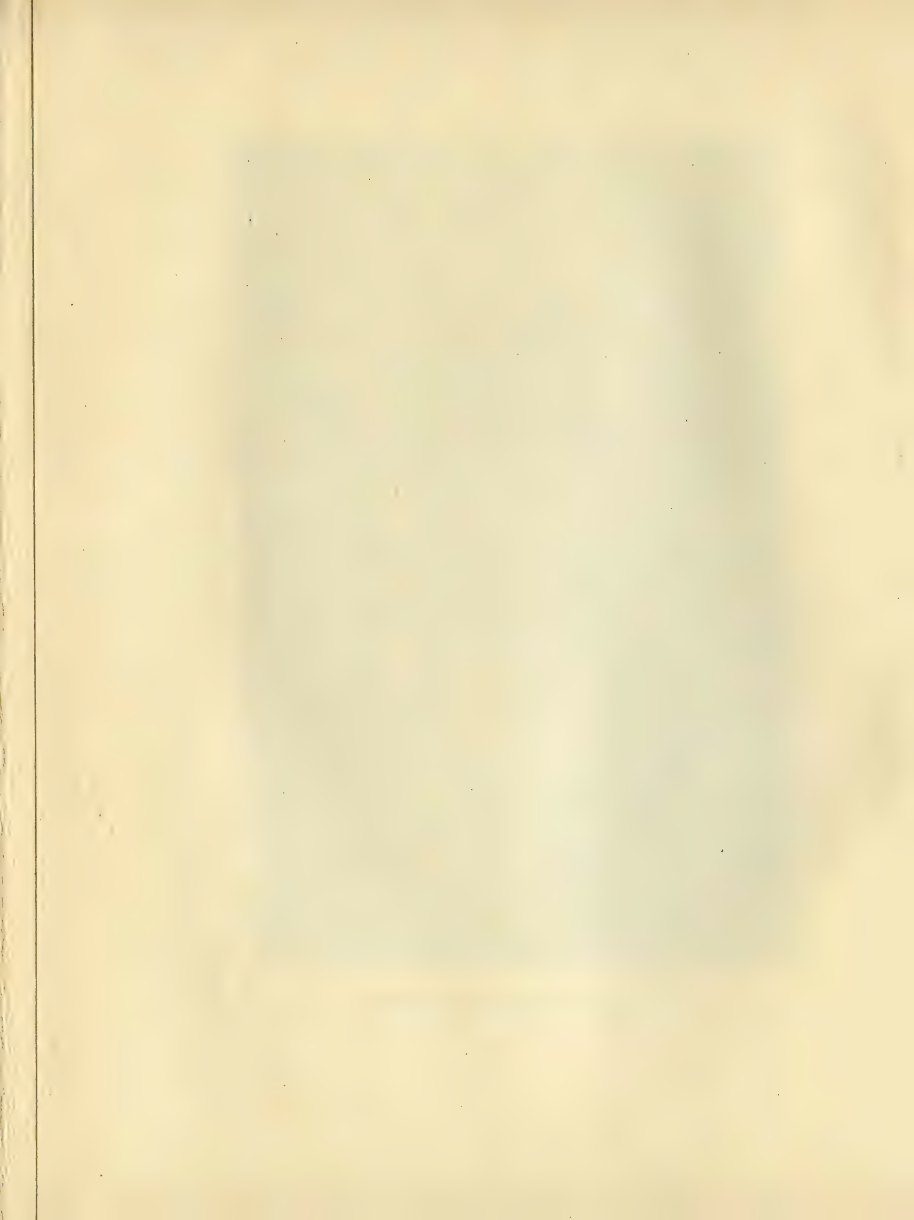
A hunt with my beagles on December 5, 1912, of four hours and eighteen minutes and a “kill in the open.” They ran “Puss” over thirty miles as near as we could trace the hunt on a map.

Another hunt with my daughter Roxane hunting them this time they killed her (the hare) in fifty minutes—by far the largest hare I have ever seen.

Three hunts in England. A week before the opening meet at Kerby Gate with the Quorn 1908 . . . minutes over the “cream” of Leicestershire and a “kill in the open.” Eighteen minutes of the best with the “Belvoir.” Ben Capell was then huntsman. The hounds killed in a garden just outside of Melton, and I had the pleasure of handing the fox to the huntsman. He very kindly gave me the brush but took it back for the lady whose garden they killed in. What a mess they made of the garden—I have always wondered if he got his “sov.” A wonderful hunt in the spring of '09 the “Quorn,” George Leif the huntsman, ran a fox into a covert the “Belvoir” hounds were drawing, and both packs went away on the same fox. Both huntsmen, both Masters and both fields were riding jealous as hell after them as hard as they could go for . . . minutes. (See “Good Sport with Famous Packs,” 1885–1910, page 147.) Six of us crossed the railway line by Old Dalby Station and hounds bowled him over in the next field. This hunt stands out as the best hunt I have ever



Portrait of the Author. 1905.



had, perhaps because I was one of six to hang up some five hundred others. It does buck one up a bit, what! The others were George Leif, Alec Wheeler, brother of the Philadelphia polo player, poor "Teddy" Brooks, the best man I have ever had the pleasure of seeing to hounds. Poor "Teddy" was killed by a sniper a week after he got to the front in 1914. Another was a man called Hewitt, and perhaps one or two more. I am sure no ladies crossed the line. It did take a bit of doing.

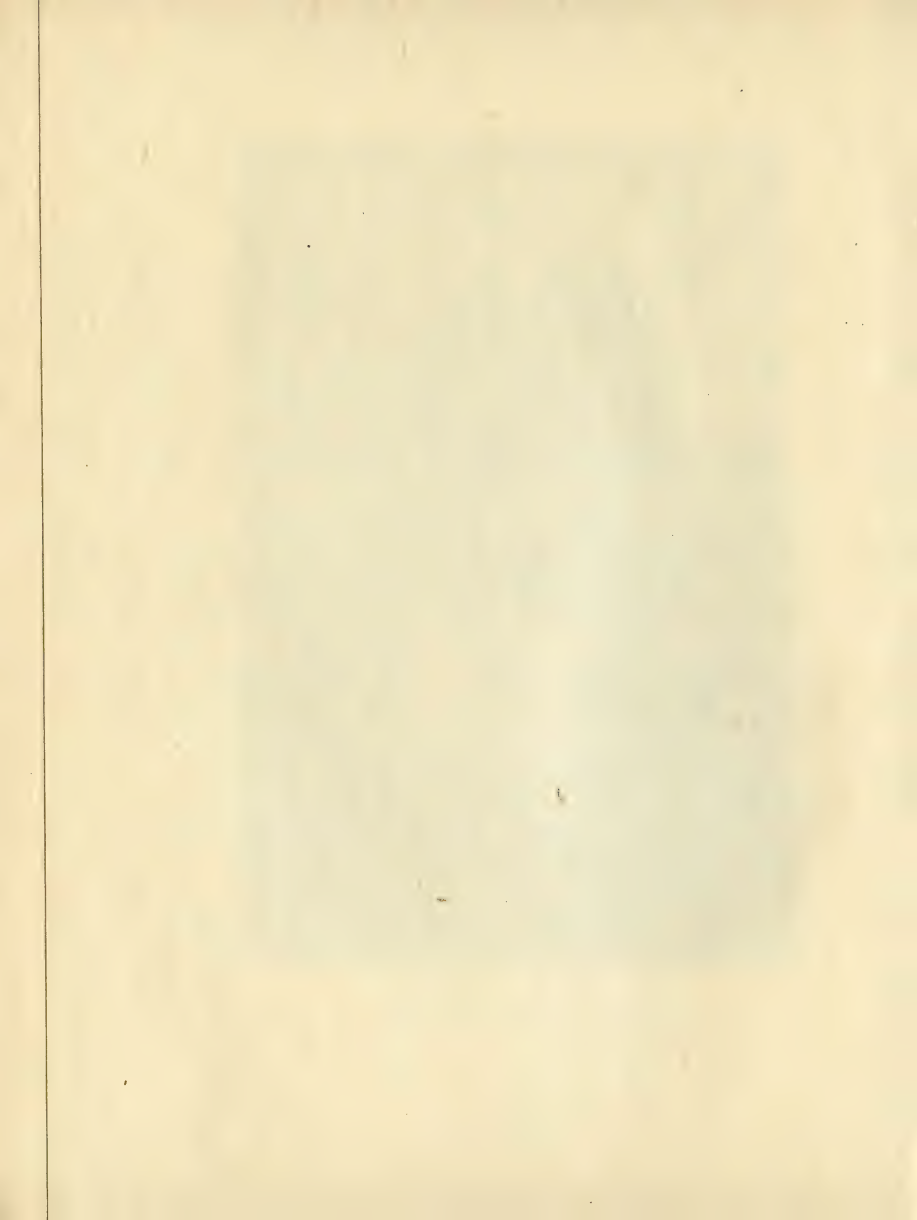
»[LETTER IX]«

No, hunting kit has changed very little in the past fifty years, except that one sees patches on boots, and scarlet coats that have seen too many spongings with "Mr. Propert's dye," due to the financial situation. They have been built by a good tailor and still hold their shape if they are a bit streaky. Leathers one sees but seldom except on a "toff" with a "shad-belly" and a blood horse. You rather like the horse and wish he were in your stable. Almost everyone hunts in "Sandonette" or "mole skin." Personally, I cannot ride in white leathers; if they are polished as they should be, they are so slippery I cannot ride a horse over a fence in them, and God help you if it rains. Not polished, your saddle, coat and horse look as if they had given themselves a time in a "powdering nitch."

In the "Shires" no one except the Pytchley wear a distinctive collar (white) on a hunt coat, and if you see one and ask who the man or woman is you will be told that they are "provincial" and never learn their names. Pink evening coats have distinctive silk facings and some also have distinctive collars.



Portrait of the Author. 1934.



I am enclosing you two photographs of myself; one I came across in Alex Higginson's book, "The Hunts of the United States and Canada" published by Frank L. Wiles, Boston 1908, taken some twenty-nine years ago; the other I just had taken in a similar pose. The only difference I can see is that the newer photograph shows more stock, doeskin gloves, and less skirt, and less hair on my head, well, *c'est la guerre*.

*Five hundred copies of
"Thoughts Upon Hunting Kit"
have been printed
of which this is Number*

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